

An essay on  
the History and Theory  
of Menstruation,  
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Virginia.

October 25<sup>th</sup>  
A. D. 1820.

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1843

1844

1845

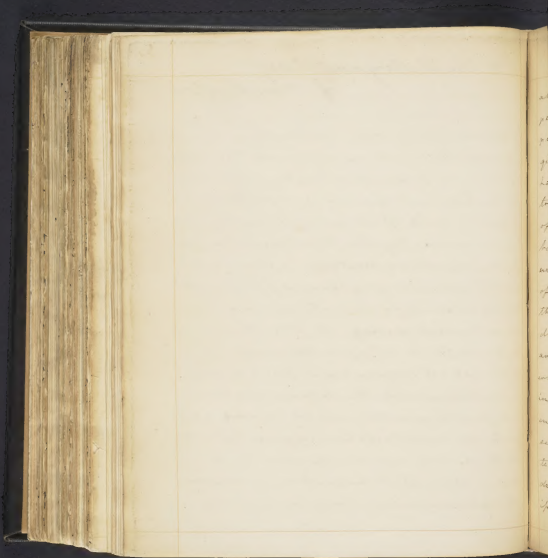
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On the History and Theory  
of Menstruation.

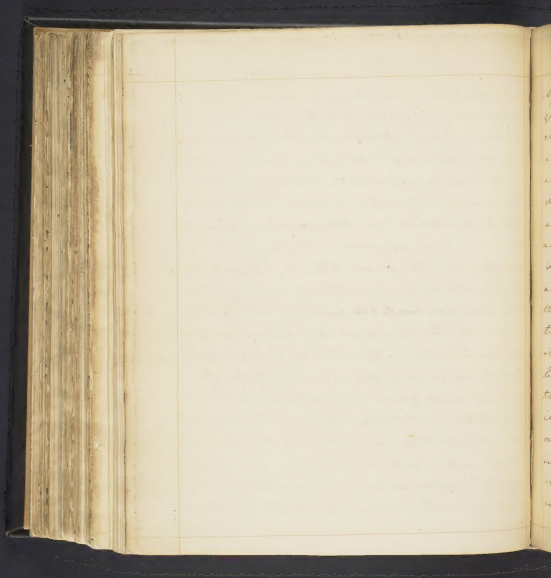
Before taking into consideration, the speculative notions, as regards, the cause of this curious and interesting phenomenon; I deem it of primary importance, first, to speak of its natural history, and appearance. By the term menstruation, or menses, we understand, a periodical discharge of a sanguineous fluid, which takes place from the uterus every lunar month; and during, its flow the woman is said to be out of order, or unwell.

Almost all women, are subject to this evacuation; and, the derangement, or retention of which, (except during utero gestation, and lactation) impairs the health both of body and mind; and the still higher offices of its destination is suspended viz impregnation. The period of life  
at

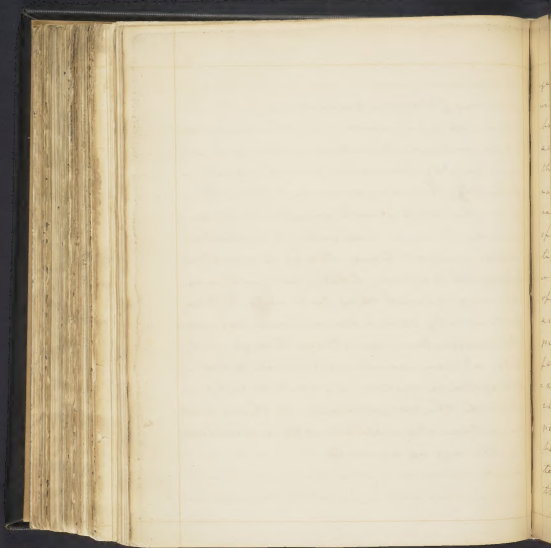


at which this discharge, makes its first appearance, is termed, puberty; which term, implies the power of reproduction. It not unfrequently happens, with young women, who have never menstruated, for this discharge to come on without any premonitory signs of its approach, or attendant indispositions but for the most part, it is preceded by uneasy sensations, very often by affections of the stomach and bowels, pain about the lumbar vertebrae and pelvis, travelling down the thigh, and various symptoms of an hysterical nature. These affections, which are more or less urgent in different individuals, gradually subside, but at the end of a month, they return with increased severity, accompanied with colicky pains, quick tense pulse, and now and then with a hot dry skin, and desire to vomit. There now issues from the vagina, a serous fluid slight.

by



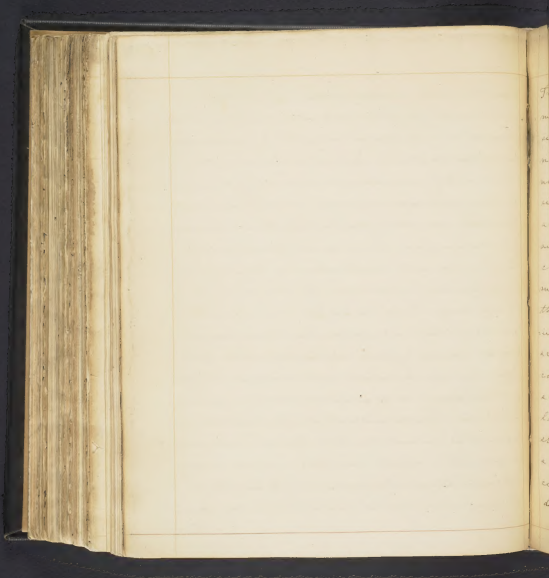
ly red, but does not become perfectly sanguineous for several periods. After the discharge of a few drops, even, the symptoms above enumerated diminish in intensity and finally disappear; a slight degree of debility tho' may succeed to this stage, and the dark purple areole which surround the eye, keep up its visitation. After a short time, the girl menstruates, with but very little inconvenience; tho' some are not thus fortunate, but are tortured by severe spasmodic pains and other distressing symptoms through out life at every menstrual period. When the uterine system is about to take on its self the performance of this function, certain changes take place proclaiming the age of puberty. The uterus and ovaria become more developed, and finally receive their adult form; the vagina also





ges; the mons veneris smoothes up, and is covered with hair; the glandular substance of the breast is unfolded, and the cellular and adipose part increases; at the same time the mental functions become more invigorated, and new passions assert their sovereignty over the female heart. The varieties of constitution, of climate, and mode of life, have great influence on the earlier or later manifestation of this phenomenon of puberty. There seems to exist, a very strong analogy, derived from the vivifying influence of heat, upon vegetables, and the female constitution with respect to men-  
 struation; for in general, the warmer the climate, the earlier will the menses appear. The inhabitants of tropical climates, begin to menstruate long before, and terminate much earlier in life, than those who dwell in northern regions.

Thus,



[illegible]







[illegible]





During these years, under the civilised name of B. and C. League ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> Newman and a great many of the most eminent writers on the subject of Home Rule have published their views in the pages of the League. It is true that the League itself has not provided regularly, though it has a committee for the purpose, with a medium for the publication of the views of its members. The number of members is not very large, and it is not easy to see how it can be increased. It is true that the League has a great many friends, and it is not easy to see how it can be increased. It is true that the League has a great many friends, and it is not easy to see how it can be increased. It is true that the League has a great many friends, and it is not easy to see how it can be increased.



granular layer, and in no way is  
 out of its connection, coincident with  
 the outer layer of the cuticle  
 is lined by the membrana decidua over  
 but is very short in its extent before  
 the isthmus is demarcated by the decidua  
 being thick, hence any injury there  
 by during any communication between  
 the internal cavity and the vagina.

Things being thus, in circumstances where the  
 wound is so close it would be presumed  
 that the membrana decidua and  
 corpora, which would certainly des-  
 troy these connections, especially in the  
 earlier months of pregnancy, and the  
 same hemorrhage would be the consequence.  
 even the specific action of the  
 uterus at the isthmus taken in the  
 situation of the uterus in the  
 same position as in the case of the  
 uterus in the same position as in the  
 uterus in the same position as in the



[illegible]



test with perfect promise. I remain only  
for the first time or six months, and in  
no instance up to the eighth month of  
pregnancy. This very interesting case,  
come within the immediate sphere of  
observation of Dr. L. sees himself, the not  
tho' true, he says, but the fact. In both,  
the discharge presented all the charac-  
teristic marks of a genuine secretory ac-  
tion of the uterus; a fluid perfectly clear  
for a time, and differing in every respect  
from that of extravasated blood.

There is, however, a great deal to be  
learned from the present position, and  
it is to be seen that the present discharge  
is not a simple secretion, but is derived  
from the uterine cavity. But that the  
discharge, when it is in the uterine cavity,  
is not a simple secretion, but is derived  
from the uterine cavity, and that the  
discharge, when it is in the uterine cavity,  
is not a simple secretion, but is derived  
from the uterine cavity.





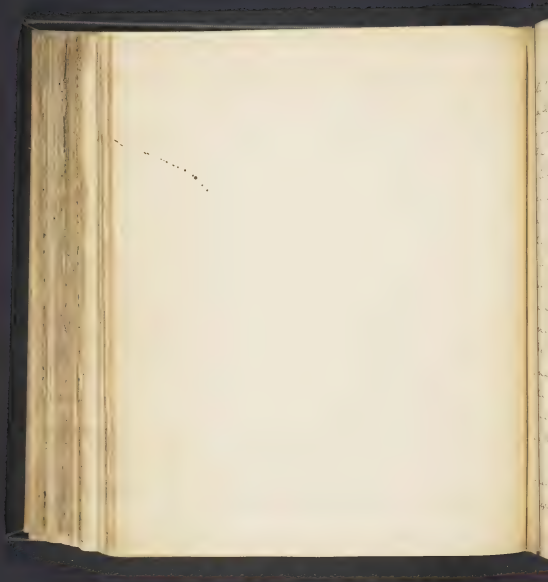
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The work of menstruation being perfect-  
 ed by conception, there would seem to  
 exist no further demand for the sta-  
 tion of the female. But it is evi-  
 dent by some that far from being  
 that the menstrual blood, is in  
 some way or other necessary to the sup-  
 port of the fecundated ovum, if this be  
 the case we can presume for a moment  
 that nature will be so kind in her  
 provision as to direct a passage for  
 the escape of that which was in-  
 tended and destined for the nour-  
 ishment and growth of the fetus in  
 utero. By assisting to the humbling pro-  
 cess of her hands, as well, as those  
 of the Jachsky which are embraced  
 within the three kingdoms of the har-  
 mony, where we see in every instance  
 a most assurance to the blessed







still exists regarding the source and  
nature of this discharge. By some it  
is said to be <sup>not</sup> a retrograde con-  
dition, which the atrophy of the  
uterus; some maintain that it pro-  
ceeds from the vagina; and an opin-  
ion of still more modern date is that  
there are receptacles or sinuses in the  
ovary, not collected into distinct  
membranes or lined in such, but  
have been situated in the ovary  
certainly in the dissecting room.  
But going from the study to the  
anatomical museum to ascertain  
the truth - the removal of the  
imaginary one to a heart bounding  
with joy at the idea of promulgating  
a new theory, the eyes were deep-  
quand and beheld the imaginary sinus  
represented by, Henry, who dissected





women at such a stage of pregnancy, and under  
 circumstances so propitious to the  
 discovery, would have some where met,  
 declared, and recorded (if it existed)  
 such an organization of the parts. We  
 however, see or hear of no such thing;  
 neither has subsequent experience de-  
 monstrated their existence. ~~It~~ From  
 the vagina, why does an obstruction  
 arise, dependent on disease of uterus, es-  
 sentially, & exclusively? There certainly can  
 obtain no rational reason for its absence  
 under such circumstances, if this  
 opinion be true. But we have still strong  
 evidence against it. Dr. Hunter, observes  
 that the union of tumours, which is  
 the cause of such a disease, is  
 the union of the tumours, & of the  
 vessels, & is an unqualifiedly true  
 fact, & is a well known fact.



The veins of the uterus are straight and  
make not at all of the spiral vessels  
as of the arteries consequently are  
less numerous in the vagina the  
veins of the uterus, but from the ute-  
rine we see that by no means to conse-  
der that drainage is an evil vasalness  
is a more open for in being collected  
and will rather coagulate, remove  
and cut down like the blood vessels  
in the uterus. Some say that part of  
the body. Besides it gives sign of  
the drainage of blood & regular  
cycles more within the one or other  
system of vessels being lighter than  
being and darker than arterial  
blood the veins are more numerous  
in the uterus than in the vagina  
and are more numerous in the  
uterus than in the vagina and are  
more numerous in the uterus than in the  
vagina.







incompatible with the phenomena of men-  
struation he deems it a duty to expose their  
absurdities, and to by so doing, to banish  
them out from the pages of me-  
dical history. Among the facts of these  
theories, which we shall take notice  
of is that of lunar influence. By  
Aristotle and his followers it was sup-  
posed that the mind of the human  
body was, like the ocean influenced  
according to the phases of the moon,  
and he concluded that monstrosities  
were produced by the influence of the  
moon. This is very promptly and offic-  
iously refuted by the known fact of  
men menstruating. Very frequently  
the increase and decrease of the moon  
is more true it is should not this  
be charge to a place in men and not  
the inferior animals, or they are soon





is as much exposed to its nocturnal  
 reg. pain proceeding from a removal of  
 this doctrine, such it arose from gen-  
 eral practice. But in this, we discover  
 a real inconsistency, for we know that  
 never delective from any other part  
 of the system prior to reducing the  
 number of menstruations to several  
 times the quantity does not interrupt  
 the flow nor the amount discharged  
 is great from a stable and uniform  
 source from a nearly unobstructed.  
 To the foregoing objections may be add-  
 ed the instance of the circulating  
 sanguineous vessels who from menstros  
 sanguine were united together. It though  
 some blood flows in each, on ac-  
 count of the anastomoses of the  
 abdominal blood vessels at the veins.  
 It flows frequently both in the



period, and quantity of their menstruation. It has also been attributed to fermentation. By the chemists, who farther, this theory, it was concluded; that at the time of puberty, there, existed in the uterus, a menereal acid or lemon, and, that certain salts were thrown off by the uterine arteries, which produced this fermentation. Now their ingenuity, could convert the uterus into a chemical laboratory, we are at a loss to fancy; for certainly, no part of that viscus, is as yet, discovered that seems calculated for such an office. Boerhaave, to whom we owe so much, and whose ingenuity, seemed paramount (if so be) with his judgment; menstruation is ascribed to the agency of gastric plethora, or topical congestion. This position runs thus, that all the parts  
of



of the system were regularly, and successively evolved, and that the evolution of each particular part must especially depend, upon that plethora or increased congestion in its proper vessels. I therefore suppose to be the situation of the uterus at the periods of parturition, and that this congestion, or increased determination of blood to its vessels, either by its mechanical distention, forcing the extremities of the uterine arteries terminating on the surface of its cavity, and thereby causing an effusion of blood there, or, by its presence stimulating the vessels, and exciting in them an hemorrhagic effort which forces their extremities, and consequently, producing the same effect. In either way, he accounts for the  
 first



local appearance of blood from the  
 uterus. This complicated and re-acted  
 condition of the vessels of the ute-  
 rus, gives rise to a new congestion in  
 them, so as to put them on a balance  
 with the rest of the system, till they  
 are again brought to that degree of  
 distention, or, induce a new hemo-  
 static effort, producing the same  
 result as in the former or first in-  
 stance. Thus an emission of blood  
 from the uterus seems necessary, in  
 women who are in a state of  
 congestion from the human system, &  
 require to be evacuated, & indicates  
 that the morbid circulation, upon  
 the surface or even, use of the cir-  
 culation, kept up by the force of habit.  
 But this lean, pallid and ingenious  
 woman, must share the melancholy





late of those that were before it, not  
 being totally immaterial to explain  
 the phenomena of construction.  
 according to local determinations,  
 which evidently is the fact, what does  
 become "bony glands" when excited by  
 its appropriate stimulus, becomes a  
 center of fluxion. This is very fairly  
 manifested, in the testicles, which,  
 being stimulated by lascivious ideas,  
 secrete the semen masculinum. The  
 proposition, so holds good as regards  
 the uterus, it is a kind of reservoir  
 of menstrual matter, and from the  
 stimulus, upon the existence, and perfect  
 condition, and to a certain state of  
 a high & healthy stimulus, the  
 performance of this function.  
 This is proven by the experiments of  
 Men. Foll., and from the fact of the



in these very vessels, or expressed in diseases of these organs. At this congestion of the vessels, in the hemorrhagic induced by the distention, is the cause of menstruation; evidently, the effused blood, in the hands would present all the characteristic marks of hemorrhagic blood. But this we deny for reasons already assigned.

We last thing, and which we take care to account for the cause of this effusion, is the effusion in the uterus, which is a well known disease. We believe that the evidence of a recent effusion is not lost in the uterus. In confirmation of this opinion, we have the authority of Dr. Williams, Burns, Jones, Chapman and Jones. I suppose, on such authority, I do not hesitate a moment, to repose in the con-

science



distances in the same proportion. But is  
given rather harder than the more re-  
solute & names a tho' they stand among  
the brightest & a lot of the medical  
world we will briefly in some of  
the leading in a name address in  
to support it's not the uterus in its  
below a sub-muscular structure resembles  
a granular being equally liable to scan-  
dals and cancer. The arrangement of  
the vessels is evidently designed that  
the circulation should be immediate  
not a general circulation. The arter-  
ies are not only exceedingly convoluted  
but are larger and with thicker coats  
than their corresponding veins. To add  
to the size of the arteries is a right in  
one, a general in the common in a  
more perfect the right in an end in  
the arteries, and in them with different



ty, from the rigidity and narrowness of the veins. 3<sup>d</sup> That, in many of the inferior animals, during the season of venereal inclination, there is an uterine effusion, undoubtedly a secretion, which seems to answer the same end as menstruation; this tho' differs from the menstrual blood, as regards colour; not a foaming its red hue. If this venereal desire be violently exasperated, from confinement, or other causes, the discharge assumes a sanguineous appearance, this frequently obtains in the bitch, kept from the male. And lastly, that the menses are of a kind sui generis, or, at least differing very essentially from blood, as appearing neither its colour, odour, or coagulability, and in chemical analyses presenting different results. If this be not truly, the efficient and physical cause of menstruation, its influence has at least





least, derives much of its precision from the treatment, of <sup>the</sup> diseases & actions of these functions, and has enabled the practitioner, to direct with much <sup>more</sup> precision, and prospect of success, those articles of the Mat. Med. called emmenagogues which have been so much abused and stigmatized by succeeding generations. The ultimate, or final end of menstruation, is, to give to the uterus, an aptitude to conception. Little, or no diversity of sentiment now exist as respects the accuracy of this opinion; nay, it may be called a fact. Under such circumstances, we deem it wholly unnecessary, to enter into any argument or statement of facts in its support. We shall therefore conclude finally; hoping that we have done the subject partial justice; and that, if it meets not decided approbation, it will at least answer the end for which it is destined.

Finis.

